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NSC BRIEFING NOTES

3 December 1963

CUBA

I. Since the October crisis of 1962, the Soviets have been engaged in a continuing program of withdrawing military personnel from Cuba.

A. Most of those who now remain are advisers and technicians who are training Cuban personnel, supervising the use and maintenance of equipment turned over to the Cubans, [REDACTED]

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2. Based on our continuing appraisal of Soviet activity in Cuba, we estimate that Soviet military strength there is now about four to seven thousand.

II/ There are a number of indications that Fidel Castro feels—with increasing urgency—the need for some dramatic new victory to restore the momentum of his revolution, to enhance the regime's security, and perhaps ultimately to lessen Cuba's dependence on the Soviet Union.

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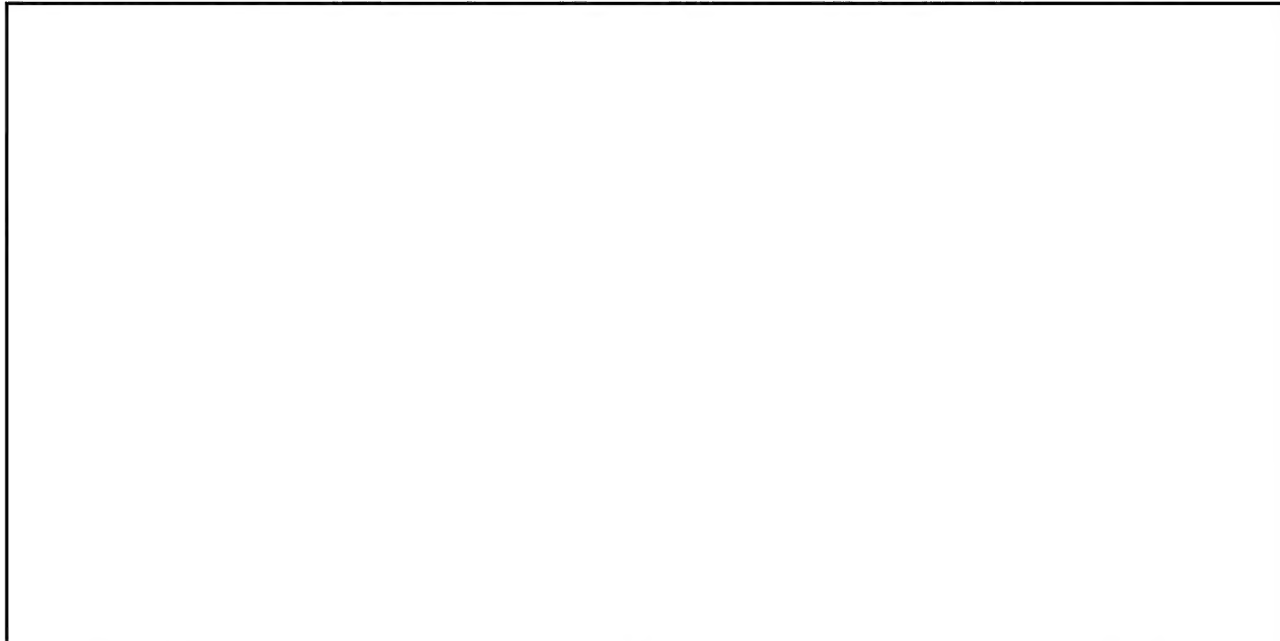
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] strongly suggest that what Castro has in mind is the intensification of revolutionary activity elsewhere in Latin America.

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SECRET

-2-

- C. The most dramatic evidence of the new Cuban^{sense of} urgency was the discovery, announced by the Venezuelan government on 28 November, of a large cache of weapons ~~known~~ of Cuban origin buried on a Venezuelan beach.



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3. The Venezuelan government assumed the weapons were sent from Cuba by sea

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Cuban fishing boats ~~known~~ were being used in late October to send arms to unidentified points in South America/

- D. The Venezuelan arms cache is the most solid evidence of major Cuban support for Latin American subversives to come to light since 1959; Castro is known to have provided training, money and guidance to Latin American subversives, but has ~~usually~~ ^{tried}—to avoid ~~exception—precise~~ actions that would clearly be traceable to Cuba.

1. Castro may have ~~been motivated by a desire to~~ taken this greater that usual risk not only because of his greater sense of urgency but also because of his estimate, probably erroneous, that the Venezuelan

-3-

E. While Venezuela remains Castro's key target, he is also actively pushing for the initiation of revolutionary violence in a number of other countries, including Guatemala, Peru, Panama, Ecuador, and Colombia.

F. While Castro's subversive assets vary greatly from country to country in strength and organization, ~~not~~ in none of them—with the possible exception of Venezuela—do they appear strong enough for decisive revolutionary action in the near future.

1. They could, however, spark serious disorders and possibly establish initial gains which might ultimately threaten the target governments.
2. Che Guevara ^{conceded} ~~admitted~~, in an article published in the regime's ideological journal in September, that the revolutionary struggle in Latin America will be long and bloody but he declared that what is needed is that action begin now.